THE 1607/1548.

PREVIOUS QUESTION

With regard to

RELIGION:

Humbly offer'd, as neceſſary to be conſider'd, in order to the ſettling and determining all other queſtions on this ſubject.

By THO. CHUBB.

The FIFTH EDITION.

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This book, which was originally ſold for Six-pence, but for many years not to be had without the reſt of Mr. *Chubb*'s works; at the requeſt of ſeveral perſons, who are of opinion that the ſame may be of great advantage to the publick, is now reprinted: And that its uſefulneſs may be as extenſive as poſſible, is ſold for [redacted] 2d

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PREVIOUS QUESTION

With regard to

RELIGION.

AS there is not any thing within the compaſs of human knowledge, which man is more concern'd to diſcover, than what is *true religion*; ſo there is not any ſubject, men have exerciſed their thoughts upon, which has been more controverted, or that has produced more direful effects amongſt mankind.

The diſputes betwixt Chriſtians, Mahometans, Jews, and Pagans, and betwixt the ſeveral ſects that take place amongſt each of theſe, are generally about religion; each party thinking themſelves obliged to defend and propagate what they eſteem to be really ſuch, and to root out, and aboliſh what they judge to be otherwiſe. And,

As the queſtions on this ſubject are various, ſo there is one queſtion, namely, *What true religion ariſes from, and is founded upon*, that is previous to them all; the right underſtanding and ſettling of which point, is neceſſary to the clearing and ſettling of the reſt: With regard to which, I obſerve;

True Religion, I think, muſt ariſe from, and be founded upon, either the *moral fitneſs of things*, or the *arbitrary will and pleaſure of God*: And this, I think, will plainly appear, when I have ſtated the notion, and ſhewn in what ſenſe I underſtand the ſeveral terms I here make uſe of.

By the term *religion*, I underſtand that which is the *ground* of *divine acceptance*: Or, in other words, it is that which does render men acceptable and pleaſing to God. And,

By *true* religion, I mean that which does *really* do ſo; in oppoſition to every thing, which men imagine or pretend will do it, when, in reality, it does not.

By the *moral* fitneſs of things, I mean that fitneſs, which ariſes from, and is founded in the *nature* and the *relations of things*; taking it for granted, that there is an eſſential difference betwixt good and evil, or fitneſs and unfitneſs, ariſing from the nature and the relations of things, antecedent to, and independent of any divine or human determination concerning them: So that,

When I ſay true religion ariſes from, and is founded upon the moral fitneſs of things; my meaning is (ſuppoſing that to be the caſe) that the duty which God requires at our hands, is ſuch, as, in the nature of things, is fit and proper to be required of, and expected from creatures conſtituted, circumſtanced, and related as we are; and that the ground of his being pleaſed with, and ſhewing us favour, is, becauſe we are the ſuitable, and proper objects of his approbation and affection.

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The term *arbitrary*, is oppoſed to *reſtraint*; and when it is apply'd to *human* actions, the reſtraint is of two kinds, namely, *political*, and *moral*.

Political reſtraint is that which ariſes from the law and conſtitution of every country, in which men live, or which they rule over. And men are ſaid to act or not to act arbitrarily, as their actions are not, or as they are, govern'd and reſtrain'd by thoſe laws. As thus:

All thoſe princes, who act according to their own will and pleaſure, and who have the ſole power of making laws for, and the diſpoſing of the perſons and properties of their ſubjects; ſuch princes are ſaid to be arbitrary: And their government is called arbitrary government, becauſe they are not under the direction nor the reſtraint of law, in the exerciſe of it.

On the other ſide, when men act, or rule, not according to their own will and pleaſure, but by, or according to a precedent law; then they are ſaid not to act or rule arbitrarily. As, when the King of *Great Britain* acts agreeably to the laws of this kingdom, then he is ſaid not to act arbitrarily, that is, not to act againſt, or above law; becauſe, in all ſuch caſes, his actions are govern'd and reſtrain'd by the laws of his country.

It is not the good or bad principle the action ſprings from, nor yet the good or evil it produces, which denominates the action to be arbitrary in this reſpect, or to be the contrary; but only as the actor is under, or above the reſtraint of human laws, as aforeſaid.

Moral reſtraint is that which ariſes from the moral fitneſs of things: And men are ſaid to act arbitrarily in this reſpect, when they are under no ſuch reſtraint; that is, when they act without any regard to the fitneſs, or unfitneſs of things, as aforeſaid. And, on the other ſide, they are ſaid not to act arbitrarily, in this reſpect, when they make the moral fitneſs of things, the rule and meaſure of their actions.

To apply the term *arbitrary* to *God*, it can reſpect only *moral* reſtraint. For tho' human laws are rules for men to direct their behaviour by, and therefore mens actions may properly be ſaid to be arbitrary, or to be otherwiſe, as the actor is under, or above the reſtraint of ſuch laws; yet theſe are not a rule to God. And therefore if his actions are directed by any law, it muſt be by the fitneſs of things, and conſequently he cannot properly be ſaid to act arbitrarily, or the contrary, any otherwiſe, than as he is not, or as he is influenced, and reſtrained by the moral fitneſs of things, as aforeſaid. So that when I apply the term *arbitrary* to God, I oppoſe it to moral reſtraint, as above explained: which leads me to obſerve;

By the arbitrary will of God, I mean (ſuppoſing this to be the caſe) that he is not influenced and governed in his dealings with his creatures, by the moral fitneſs of things, but by ſovereign pleaſure: he commands and forbids, loves and hates, rewards and puniſhes arbitrarily; that is, without regarding the fitneſs, or unfitneſs of what he requires, or diſpenſes;

penſes; or the ſuitableneſs, or unſuitableneſs of the objects of his approbation, or diſlike. And,

When I ſay true religion is founded upon the arbitrary will of God, my meaning is, (ſuppoſing that to be the caſe) that the duty which God requires from us, and which when complied with, will render us the objects of his favour, does not ariſe from its being right and fit, in the nature of things, but merely from ſovereign pleaſure: God makes whatever he pleaſes the conditions of his favour, without any regard to right or wrong in the caſe.

Having thus explain'd the terms, I think it evidently appears, that *true religion*, or that which will render men acceptable to God, muſt be either, *what God has arbitrarily made the conditions of his favour*; or elſe, *that which, in the nature of things, renders men the ſuitable and proper objects of it:* Which of theſe is the caſe is the preſent queſtion. And,

That this queſtion, in order of nature, goes before all other queſtions on this ſubject; and that the ſettling of it is neceſſary to the ſettlement of the reſt, and conſequently, that it is of the greateſt importance to mankind; this, I think, will as evidently appear as the former, when I have fairly examin'd the point, and ſhewn how the caſe will ſtand, in the ſeveral particulars following, whether we conſider true religion as founded on the moral fitneſs of things, or on arbitrary pleaſure, as aforeſaid. And,

Firſt, If true religion ariſes from, and is founded upon the moral fitneſs of things, then God

God in this reſpect anſwers the character, which the whole frame of nature gives him; that is, he acts the part of a *wiſe* and *good Being*.

It is the utmoſt perfection of wiſdom and goodneſs, for a being, who has all knowledge and all power abſolutely and independently in himſelf, and is at perfect liberty in the uſe and exerciſe of theſe; for ſuch an one, when he has call'd *moral agents* into being, not to take advantage of the *impotency* and *dependency* of ſuch creatures, by *impoſing* upon them, or acting *arbitrarily* with them, or by them; but, on the contrary, to make the *moral* fitneſs of things the *rule* and *meaſure* of his *actions*, with regard to what he requires from, and diſpenſes to them: This, I ſay, is wiſdom and goodneſs to perfection. And this is the very caſe with reſpect to God, ſuppoſing true religion ariſes from, and is founded upon the moral fitneſs of things, as aforeſaid.

God can, with regard to his natural liberty and ability, command from us, and deal with us, as he pleaſes; he being above all poſſibility of controul: And therefore, for him not to make uſe of his knowledge and power diſagreeably, or to the diſadvantage of his creatures, but to direct theſe by the rules of wiſdom and goodneſs, in all his dealings with them; this is truly valuable, and highly worthy of that God, who is, by his own choice, the *common parent* of every creature, as he *voluntarily* call'd them into being. On the other ſide,

If true religion is founded on the arbitrary will of God, then God does not, in this reſpect,

ſpect, anſwer the character which nature has given him; that is, he *does not* act the part of a *wiſe* and *good Being*.

One who has all knowledge and power abſolutely and independently in himſelf, and conſequently muſt moſt clearly diſcern the eſſential differences in things; and who is at perfect liberty to act from what motive he pleaſes; for ſuch a *Being* to *neglect*, or *refuſe* to act agreeably to the nature, and the relations of things, and to make mere *capricious humour* (if I may ſo ſpeak) the *rule* and *meaſure* of his *actions*; for ſuch an one to command for commanding ſake, and not becauſe what he requires is fit, and proper to be commanded; for ſuch an one to love and value, hate and deſpiſe, either perſons or things, without regarding the ſuitableneſs or unſuitableneſs of the perſons, or the things themſelves; theſe are demonſtrations of the *want* of *wiſdom* and *goodneſs* in ſuch a Being: And yet this is the caſe with reſpect to God, ſuppoſing true religion to be founded upon his arbitrary will and pleaſure, as aforeſaid.

God can, with regard to his natural liberty and power, act arbitrarily with his creatures in matters of religion; that is, with reſpect to their duty and his acceptance: And ſo he can act the part of a *weak* and *childiſh*, or of an *evil* and *vicious Being*. But he cannot act thus, and preſerve his *moral* character; he cannot perform ſuch a part, and yet be a wiſe and good Being: becauſe the doing ſo, is abſolutely inconſiſtent with that character. Again,

Secondly,

Secondly, If true religion is founded on the moral fitneſs of things; then man, by *his own natural ability* (conſider'd as a man) is qualified to *diſcover it.*

Man is a creature endow'd with a faculty or power we call *underſtanding*; in the exerciſe of which, he is capable of diſcerning the eſſential difference betwixt good and evil, or fitneſs and unfitneſs, as they ariſe from, and are founded in the nature and the relations of things: Which good and evil is call'd *moral*, as it is the *object* of the *underſtanding*, and is diſcover'd by it only; and as it is diſtinguiſhed from that good and evil which is *natural* or *phyſical*, which is the *object* of our *ſenſes*, and is diſcover'd by them alone.

Man being thus furniſh'd with the faculty of underſtanding, and true religion being founded on the moral fitneſs of things, he muſt of courſe be qualified to diſcover it, becauſe it falls within the proper province of the foremention'd faculty.

Let him but turn his thoughts upon himſelf, and conſider how he is conſtituted and circumſtanced, and how he ſtands naturally related to God, and to his fellow-creatures; and then he may with eaſe diſcover and certainly know, what he muſt be and do, to render himſelf acceptable to ſuch a wiſe and good Being, as (upon the preſent ſuppoſition) God is allow'd to be; and what it is, in the nature of things, which will make him a ſuitable and proper object of divine approbation, or diſlike. I ſay, a man, by the exerciſe of his underſtanding, may eaſily

know

know what is true religion; becauſe it conſiſts in acting *agreeably* to his *nature*, *relations*, and *circumſtances*, as aforeſaid; which agreeableneſs, his underſtanding qualifies him to diſcover.

It is true, there may be caſes attended with ſuch *perplexing* circumſtances, and whoſe conſequences may be ſo very *uncertain*, that it may be exceeding difficult to know what is beſt and fitteſt to be done. But then, even in theſe caſes, if a man, after due examination, does that which upon the *whole*, appears to him to be *beſt*, that is, which is moſt for the *common* good; he will not fail of divine acceptance, whatever the conſequence of his behaviour may be. For, as he makes wiſdom and goodneſs the rule and meaſure of his actions, ſo, if God is a wiſe and good Being (as is here ſuppoſed) he will *approve* of ſuch a conduct. On the other ſide,

If true religion is founded on the arbitrary will of God, then man is *not*, by *his own natural ability*, qualify'd to *diſcover* it: He has not any footſteps to trace, nor any rule to guide him, in his enquiries after it. He is in this caſe in a much worſe condition, than the blind man is in, when in purſuit of the objects of ſight: For tho' the blind man cannot diſcover the object ſought for, by that ſenſe, yet, poſſibly, he may do it by another; whereas in the preſent caſe, man has not any natural faculty, which can *diſcover* what is true religion, or *diſtinguiſh* it from the contrary.

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The exerciſe of his underſtanding cannot ſtand him in any ſtead. For tho' it qualifies him to diſcern, and judge of moral ſubjects; yet as religion, in this caſe, is not of moral conſideration (it ariſing only from arbitrary pleaſure) ſo it does not come within the reach of this diſcerning faculty. And therefore thoſe men ſay *right*, who ſay that *reaſon* has not any thing to do with *religion*; ſuppoſing true religion to be founded on arbitrary pleaſure, and that by reaſon is meant either the exerciſe of the forementioned faculty, or the object of it, *viz.* the moral fitneſs of things.

To *reaſon* in this caſe, is exceedingly abſurd, and is the ſame, as if a man ſhould attempt to diſtinguiſh *colours* by his *ear*. Reaſon, in the nature of the thing, cannot diſcover, or be at all a judge of thoſe things which depend only on the arbitrary will of God: Such things as theſe, are diſcoverable only by divine revelation; ſo it is that alone which muſt determine every thing concerning them. Which leads me to obſerve,

Thirdly, If true religion is founded on the moral fitneſs of things, then man is naturally qualify'd to *diſtinguiſh* betwixt *divine revelation* and *deluſion*; at leaſt he is qualify'd to guard againſt all ſuch deluſion, as is *hurtful* to mankind.

When any thing comes forth under the character of divine revelation, our underſtandings qualify us to examine and judge, whether it is agreeable with, or contrary to

the nature and the relations of things. And tho' its agreeableneſs with the nature of things, is no certain proof that it is divine, but only that it *may* be ſo; yet its diſagreeableneſs therewith is a demonſtration, that it *cannot* poſſibly come from God; ſeeing (upon the preſent ſuppoſition) God makes the moral fitneſs of things the rule and meaſure of his actions; which ſuch a revelation is repugnant to.

For the farther illuſtration of this point, I ſhall offer the following caſes.

Suppoſe a man ſhould come to me under the character of a heavenly meſſenger, and ſhould declare it to be the will of God, that I ſhould love my neighbour as myſelf, and do unto all men, as I would they ſhould do unto me, (taking theſe general rules with their proper limitations) and that in doing ſo I ſhould recommend myſelf to divine regard: And, ſuppoſe this man was not ſent of God, but was himſelf under a deluſion; I examine his meſſage and find that it is right and fit, in the nature of things, that I ſhould do as it requires; and that in ſo doing I render myſelf a ſuitable ſubject of divine favour; I likewiſe (from the ſuitableneſs of the meſſage) am induced to give credit to what the man declares of himſelf, *viz.* that he is a meſſenger ſent from God. Now tho' in this latter point I am deceived, yet it is not to my hurt; and if I am prevailed upon by it, to render myſelf more agreeable and uſeful than I ſhould otherwiſe have been, the deluſion will prove a benefit to me, and to thoſe I have to do withal. Again,

Suppoſe a man ſhould come to me, and pretend himſelf an heavenly meſſenger, as aforeſaid; and ſhould declare it to be the will of God, that I ſhould afflict and grieve my fellow-creatures, without any juſt cauſe, that is, for not agreeing with me in ſome ſpeculative points which do not admit of abſolute certainty on either ſide of the queſtion; and in like caſes, where, in the nature of the thing, there is not a proper foundation for reſentment; and that in ſo doing I ſhould entitle myſelf to divine favour: I examine this meſſage, and find it really diſagreeable in the nature of things; and from hence conclude very juſtly, that this meſſage is not divine, and conſequently that the meſſenger is either deluded himſelf, or elſe that he is an impoſtor.

So that I have a plain rule to direct and guide my judgment, in diſtinguiſhing betwixt divine revelation, and all dangerous and hurtful deluſions: And therefore, as I ſaid before, tho' in this caſe we are not abſolutely ſecure from all impoſition, yet we are qualify'd to guard againſt all ſuch as is prejudicial to mankind; as I have here ſhewn. Whereas, on the other ſide,

If true religion is founded on arbitrary pleaſure, then man is not qualify'd to diſtinguiſh betwixt divine revelation and deluſion, and conſequently lies open to, and at the mercy of every impoſer.

The *internal* characters of a revelation, whether good or bad, afford no light in this caſe. For, as God makes whatever he pleaſes the

the conditions of his favour, ſo the goodneſs or badneſs of a revelation, or of what is required by it, cannot poſſibly prove it to be divine, or to be the contrary.

If I ſhould take upon me to prove a revelation to be divine, or to be otherwiſe, from its agreeableneſs with, or its being contrary to truth, juſtice, goodneſs, *&c.* it would be juſt the ſame, as if I attempted to prove that a man can ſee, by giving ſeveral inſtances in which it is evident that he heard; there being no more connexion betwixt juſtice, goodneſs, *&c.* and arbitrary pleaſure, ſo as to argue from one to the other, than there is betwixt colour and ſound.

The caſe is the ſame with reſpect to any thing *external*, ſuch as miracles, which may attend a revelation: The having theſe, or the want of them, cannot poſſibly prove a revelation to be divine, or to be the contrary.

The *having* them proves nothing, in the preſent caſe; becauſe miracles are evidences of the *power*, but not of the *veracity* of the being that works them; and conſequently, they may attend a *lye*, for any thing we know, or for any juſt ground we have to think the contrary.

To urge in this caſe, that God will not uſe his power, nor ſuffer other beings, *viz.* evil ſpirits, to uſe theirs, for the confirmation of a lye, in a matter of ſuch importance; this is the ſame as to ſay, that God does not act arbitrarily, but from the fitneſs of things; becauſe this argument is founded upon the *moral* unfitneſs of ſuch a conduct. Again,

The *want* of miracles does not avail any thing, with regard to the divinity of a revelation, or the contrary. For as God does not make the fitneſs of things, but ſovereign pleaſure, the rule and meaſure of his actions; ſo when he gives a revelation, it muſt be wholly at his pleaſure, whether miracles ſhall attend it or not: And conſequently, we cannot fairly conclude from the want of miracles, either for or againſt the divinity of that revelation, they do not attend. Again,

Fourthly, If true religion is founded on the moral fitneſs of things, then man is naturally qualify'd to diſcover the *true ſenſe* and *meaning* of divine revelation; at leaſt he is or may be ſecure from all *dangerous* and *hurtful errors*.

Divine revelation, in this caſe, muſt accord with the nature and relations of things; and therefore, if any difficulty ſhould ariſe about the ſenſe and meaning of any branch of it, man has a ſafe and plain rule, *viz.* the fitneſs of things, to interpret it by; which, in the nature of the thing, is moſt *likely* to lead him into the true ſenſe of it: However, it will ſecure him from all dangerous errors; becauſe he cannot poſſibly fall into a *hurtful* error, when the moral fitneſs of things is his guide.

If it ſhould be urged, that the fitneſs of things is a proper guide in this caſe, with regard to thoſe parts of divine revelation that relate to practice; yet it can give no light with regard to thoſe points, which are purely ſpeculative:

I anſwer, points of ſpeculation are of two kinds, *viz.* thoſe which are abſolutely ſo, and thoſe which are ſo only with regard to us. As to the former, they relate to the phyſical nature of things; and therefore, if God ſhall think fit to give any revelations of this kind, then it muſt be granted, that the moral fitneſs of things can give no light in ſuch caſes. But then it ought to be remembered, that God will either ſo *clearly* deliver ſuch points, as that there ſhall be *no place* for error, or elſe he will *excuſe* all errors which ariſe from them; it being moſt abſurd and ridiculous, to ſuppoſe, that ſuch a wiſe and good Being, as (upon the preſent ſuppoſition) God is allowed to be, ſhould give a revelation in a way, in which it is liable to be miſunderſtood, and then be diſpleaſed with his creatures, if they miſtake the ſenſe of it; ſeeing ſuch errors are not, in the nature of the thing, a proper foundation for reſentment.

As to the latter, *viz.* points of ſpeculation, which are ſo only with regard to us, theſe relate to facts paſt, preſent, or to come, performed by God, or ſome other agent; with reſpect to which, the ſame anſwer in general will ſerve, as in the former caſe; namely, that if God ſhall think fit to reveal any thing of this kind, he will either make the revelation ſo *plain*, as that there ſhall be no place for error, or elſe *excuſe* all errors which ſpring from it. And,

If the point be ſuch as relates to divine conduct, either what God has done, or will do; and if any difficulty ariſe about the ſenſe and

meaning of any ſuch branch of divine revelation; then I ſay, the *fitneſs of things* is the *beſt rule* to *interpret* it by, and is moſt likely to lead us into the true ſenſe and meaning of it. And the reaſon of this is evident, namely, becauſe (upon the preſent ſuppoſition) it is the moral fitneſs of things, which is the rule and meaſure of God's actions. On the other ſide,

If true religion is founded on the arbitrary will of God, and if God gives a revelation to mankind, then man is not naturally qualified to diſcover the true ſenſe and meaning of it, he not having any thing to guide him in his enquiries; and therefore muſt be under the utmoſt uncertainty in that caſe. For,

As God acts from ſovereign pleaſure, ſo he may deliver his mind either clearly or darkly, expreſly or in figures; he may uſe the ſame term in the ſame or in different ſenſes, and apply it properly or improperly to the ſubject, as he pleaſes; and man has not any thing to aſſiſt or guide him in his ſearches after truth.

To *reaſon* in this caſe, is likewiſe *abſurd*; becauſe that which ariſes from arbitrary pleaſure, is out of reaſon's province: And therefore thoſe men ſay right, who ſay that reaſon is not a judge of the ſenſe and meaning of divine revelation; and that it muſt be interpreted by the ſame ſpirit, which gave it. I ſay, this is evidently the caſe, ſuppoſing God acts arbitrarily with his creatures; only this difficulty will ſtill remain, namely, that we have

have as little aſſurance of the ſenſe and meaning of any ſecond explanatory revelation, as of the firſt.

To ſay in this caſe, that God will not ſuffer a ſincere and honeſt enquirer to fall into, or continue in any dangerous error; this, if it be urg'd with any ſtrength, is to reaſon from the moral fitneſs of things, which is here ſuppoſed to be diſcarded. And,

As man is not ſecure from error, ſo his errors may be made as fatal to him as his Maker pleaſes: God may, if he pleaſe, puniſh every miſtake with eternal miſery; and if he ſhould do ſo, (the contrary to which we cannot be aſſured of, upon the preſent ſuppoſition) there is no relief, for who can deliver out of his hand? Again,

Fifthly and laſtly, If true religion is founded on the moral fitneſs of things, then it is one plain, ſimple, uniform thing, which admits of no alteration, with regard to time or place, any otherwiſe than as the nature, the relations, and the circumſtances of things differ or change.

True religion is the ſame in all ages, in all countries, and in all worlds, (if I may ſo ſpeak;) for if any of the other planets are inhabited with creatures conſtituted, circumſtanced, and related as we are, their religion muſt of courſe be the ſame as ours is; the moral fitneſs of things being the ſame in all ſpace, and thro' all duration.

Note, I would not here be underſtood to exclude all poſitive inſtitutions: For, as the circumſtances of things may render ſome in-

ſtitutions proper and uſeful to mankind, as *contributing* to *virtue*, or *true goodneſs*; ſo when that is the caſe, there is a moral fitneſs even in thoſe inſtitutions, not for any intrinſick goodneſs in them, but upon the account of that virtue they are ſubſervient to. On the other ſide,

If true religion is founded on the arbitrary will of God, then it depends upon his pleaſure, whether it ſhall be the ſame at all times, and to all people, or not; he may, if he pleaſes, make different terms of acceptance, in every age, and to every nation or family; and that which entitles to his favour to day, may draw forth his diſpleaſure to-morrow, for any thing we know, or for any ground we have to think the contrary.

To ſay in this caſe, that God will always make known his pleaſure to us, when he makes any ſuch change with regard to religion, this is what we can have no juſt ground for. That it is right and fit, in the nature of things, for God to act thus fairly with his creatures, will be granted; but what has right and fit to do, or what influence can they have, where arbitrary pleaſure is the rule of action? Which is the preſent caſe.

Thus, I think, I have given a fair repreſentation of this matter, and have ſhewn in all the inſtances I have given above, how the caſe will ſtand, whether we conſider true religion as founded on the *moral fitneſs of things*, or on *the arbitrary will of God*. And I imagine, it will eaſily be diſcerned, of what great *importance* this *queſtion* is, and what *neceſſity*

ceſſity there is of *determining* it, in order to the *ſettling* and *determining* all other *queſtions* on this *ſubject*. But,

Poſſibly it may be urged, that I have ſtarted a difficulty, but not removed it; and therefore I crave leave to obſerve farther, that there are two ways only, in which we are capable of bringing this point to an iſſue; namely, *firſt*, by examining what it is, which God makes the rule of action in other caſes, and ſo to argue by analogy; that is, to infer from his conduct in one caſe, how he will act in another; and, *ſecondly*, to examine what it is, in the nature of things, which is moſt likely to direct and determine his actions. And,

Firſt, If we examine what it is, which God makes the rule of action in other caſes, we ſhall find that it is the moral fitneſs of things. Whoever takes a view of this planet, and of all the other works of God, which come within the reach of human knowledge, will eaſily ſee the marks of wiſdom and goodneſs that run thro' the whole; every part being directed to anſwer ſome wiſe and good end.

To go about to exemplify this by an induction of particulars, would be to offer an affront to the common ſenſe and reaſon of mankind; it being that which falls within every man's obſervation, tho' it is more abundantly evident to all thoſe who are qualify'd to examine and look into the works of nature: And therefore, if an argument drawn from *analogy*, is at any time of weight, it

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muſt be ſo in the preſent caſe; and conſequently, true religion is not founded on arbitrary pleaſure, but on the moral fitneſs of things. Again,

Secondly, If we examine what it is, in the nature of things, which is moſt likely to direct and determine God's actions, we ſhall find it to be the moral fitneſs of things; as aforeſaid.

That God is, and what he is with regard to his natural properties, theſe I ſhall not meddle with the proof of; but ſhall take it for granted, that God is, and that he is neceſſarily an immenſe, eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, and conſequently a ſelf-ſufficient, independent, and unchangeable Being.

This being allowed, from hence it will follow, that as God is always capable of doing what is moſt worthy and valuable in itſelf, and which in the nature of things is right, good, beſt, and fitteſt to be done; ſeeing he knows wherein the goodneſs, fitneſs, and valuableneſs of every action lies; ſo it is moſt likely, that he always will act thus, becauſe right, good, *&c.* are ſo very beautiful and excellent in themſelves, and ſo highly preferable in the nature of things, to arbitrary pleaſure, that God cannot but be under a ſtronger diſpoſition to make theſe, rather than the other, the rule and meaſure of his actions.

So that whether we conſider the method of God's dealing in other caſes, or whether we conſult the nature of things; theſe both conclude very ſtrongly, that true religion a-

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riſes from, and is founded upon the moral fitneſs of things, and not the arbitrary will of God.

If it ſhould be urged, allowing that God does *generally* make the fitneſs of things the rule of his actions, yet it will not follow that he *always* does ſo; he is the great and only Potentate, whoſe dominion is underived, and therefore he may *ſometimes* act arbitrarily, to ſhew his creatures the abſolute ſovereignty he has over them:

I anſwer, God may or can do thus with regard to any phyſical neceſſity he is under to the contrary: But that he does act thus, will not be allowed; for if the moral fitneſs of things is a motive proper and ſufficient to influence the divine conduct in *one* caſe, it muſt be ſo in *every* caſe; the reaſon being the ſame, and as proper to influence in *all* caſes, as in *ſome*. Beſides,

This is meaſuring the ways of God, by what we ſee take place among *weak* and *vain* men; they are apt to ſhew the power and dominion they have over their fellow creatures, by acting ſuch a part as the objection ſuppoſes: But can we have ſo mean and contemptible a thought of our Maker? Can we imagine that our wiſe and good God will prefer ſuch an *affected ſhew* of *greatneſs*, to what is *truly great* and *valuable?* Yea, rather let us call back the ungenerous thought, with a *God forbid!*

Note, When I ſay it will not be allow'd that God acts arbitrarily, my meaning is, that he will not act thus in all thoſe caſes where

where the moral fitneſs of things can be a rule to him: As to all other caſes, he muſt act arbitrarily, if he acts at all; becauſe the fitneſs of things does not come into the queſtion. As thus:

Suppoſe it equally indifferent with regard to this ſyſtem, and all other ſyſtems in the univerſe, that the ſolar ſyſtem be placed where it now is, or in any other part of ſpace; then fitneſs, or unfitneſs, does not come into the caſe: And therefore the placing the ſolar ſyſtem in this part of ſpace, and not in any other, muſt be arbitrary; becauſe there was not any thing in the nature of things which could give the preference, and make it more fit, that it ſhould be placed where it is, rather than in any other part of ſpace.

THE END.

N. B. A collection of tracts in one volume in quarto formerly publiſh'd, and ſeveral tracts printed ſince, which now make two volumes in octavo, contain the whole of Mr. *Chubb's* writings; of the latter may be had any particular tract.

B M